

Resnick Relinquished

Iconic detective hangs up his skates

Suspended Sentences

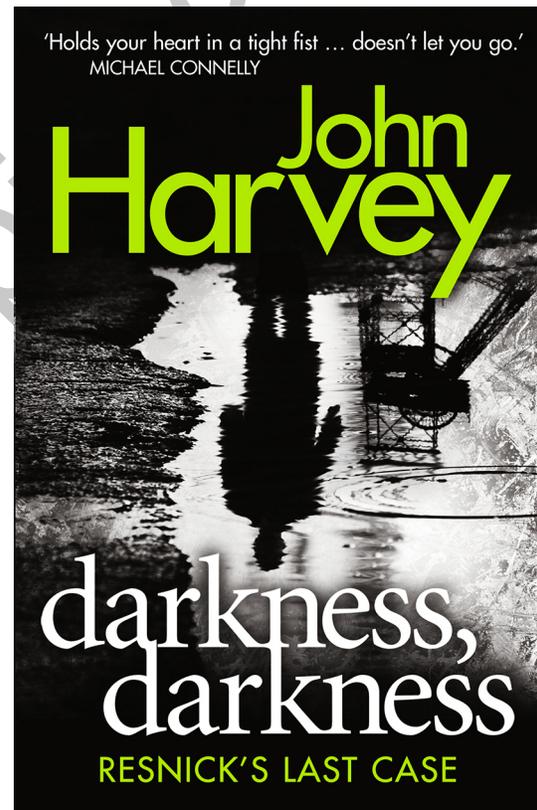
by Jim Napier

All good things, it is said, come to an end. True, unfortunately, of John Harvey's award-winning series featuring Charlie Resnick, which draws to a close after twenty-five heady years and a dozen fine tales.

In his final outing we find Detective Inspector Resnick now a civilian investigator, working part-time out of Nottingham and staving off retirement by performing the drudgery on low-profile cases, but minus the badge and the authority that goes with the job. When he learns that a body has turned up in the debris of a terraced-house being bulldozed for a new development in a distant village, he is intrigued: he'd served there as a young officer, thirty years ago. They had been turbulent times, involving head-on conflict between the miners' union and the Thatcher government. It had persisted for nearly a year and gained the attention of all Britain, and indeed the world. Resnick still clearly recalled the events and the names of those involved.

Returning to the scene of some of those confrontations, the aptly-named village of Bledwell Vale, Resnick's journey is thus both literal and metaphorical, a journey back in time to the late nineteen-eighties—a time of

strident talk and bitter confrontations, with the miners on the losing end of a battle that saw the unions destroyed and tens of thousands of men thrown out of work, reduced to taking the dole for the remainder of their days.



Resnick had been a young copper then, running a team focused on gathering intelligence. The miners' movement had sent strikers from one region to another, where they weren't known and where they could tip the scales in the event of a confrontation.

And for their part the police had their numbers augmented by reinforcements from down south, the whole a steamy mix that threatened to boil over at any moment. The strikes pitted neighbours against neighbours, fathers against sons, and sometimes wives against their husbands; and when it was over no one came out of it unchanged.

It is soon clear that the remains date from thirty years ago, and despite the passage of time, are easily identified. Jenny Hardwick had disappeared during the strike. A striking and outspoken firebrand who'd lobbied hard for the workers, Hardwick had made an impression on Resnick, and on many others in the village as well. Killed by a blow to the head and her body concealed in the foundation of a house, it's clear that she'd been murdered. Resnick's task is to sift through all the memories, all the rumours, and all the intrigue of the day to identify her killer, and if still alive, to bring the person responsible

to court. He will need all the skills he's developed over three decades of policing. And as for Resnick himself—well, you'll just have to read the book.

Darkness, Darkness is a fine tale, at once an insightful narrative of the times and a ripping good mystery. With his spare prose and iconic protagonist, John Harvey set the stage for scores of imitators, though few if any have matched his distinctive style. A skillful blend of Harvey's own informed understanding of jazz, his knowledge of the region and of policing, and his own evocative prose, readers have followed Resnick through a melancholy series of doomed relationships. The result has been a nuanced chronicle of Resnick's life, both professional and personal. It brought an immediacy and realism to Harvey's writing that few other crime writers achieve. Although Resnick will be missed, look at it this way: it's an opportunity to re-read the canon—a sumptuous twelve-book feast.

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Since 2005 Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on such websites as *Spinetingler*, *The Rap Sheet*, *Shots Magazine*, *Crime Time*, *Reviewing The Evidence*, *January* magazine, the *Montreal Review of Books*, the *Ottawa Review of Books*, and *Amazon.com*, as well as on his own award-winning site, *Deadly Diversions*. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com